

Canada, Mexico, and the United States: Overview

Land and Water Areas

The territories of the North American countries consist of land, inland waterway, and territorial ocean areas. (See table 1.) The land areas of Canada and the United States are almost equal—about nine million square kilometers (about three and a half million square miles). Canada, however, is much larger than the United States when inland waterways are considered: It has nearly four times the freshwater area of lakes and rivers than does the United States. Mexico has about one-tenth the freshwater surface of Canada, and about three-eighths that of the United States. Mexico contains 10 percent of all the North American land area, while Canada and the United States equal approximately 40 percent each. All three countries have major territorial ocean water areas of about three million square kilometers (about one million square miles) each.

Table 1 County Areas

	Square Miles			
	Total Area	Land Area	Freshwater Area	Territorial Water Area
Total	11,168,317	7,097,717	371,085	3,699,515
Canada	5,160,031	3,558,428	291,604	1,310,000
Mexico	1,916,192	756,136	30,119◄	1,129,937
United States	4,878,348	3,539,289	79,481	1,259,578◄

	Square Kilometers			
	Total Area	Land Area	Freshwater Area	Territorial Water Area
Total	30,959,324	20,339,497	1,039,016	9,580,811
Canada	13,363,179	9,215,430	755,180	3,392,569
Mexico	4,962,453	1,958,201	78,000◄	2,926,252
United States	12,633,691	9,165,866	205,836	3,261,990◄

	Percentages			
	Total Area	Land Area	Freshwater Area	Territorial Water Area
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
Canada	43.16	45.31	72.68	35.41
Mexico	16.03	9.63	7.51◄	30.54
United States	40.81	45.06	19.81	34.05◄

◄ Denotes estimate

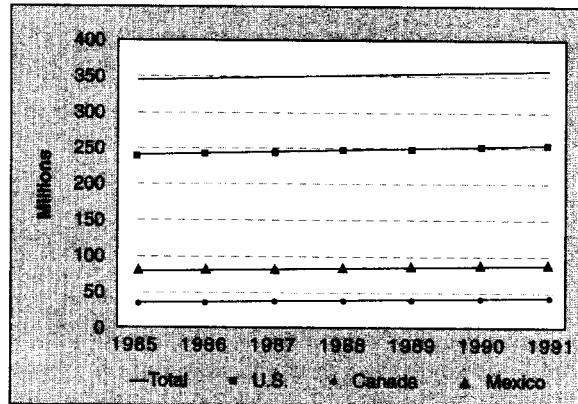
Sources: U.S.: *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 1992* by the U.S. Department of Commerce. Mexico: *Mexico 1992* by the Mexico City Chamber of Commerce and Consultores Internacionales, S.C. Canada: *The Canadian Yearbook, 1991* and phone contact with Statistics Canada. The Mexican freshwater and U.S. territorial water areas are estimates based on National Geographic Society maps.

Populations

North American populations ranged in 1990 from almost 27 million in Canada, to 81 million in Mexico, to 250 million in the United States. (See figure 1.) Mexico has a younger population than the other two countries. It also has a population growth rate twice that of its northern neighbors (about 2 percent annually). About 30 percent of Mexico's population was considered economically active (i.e., employed) in 1990, compared with about 49 percent in the United States and about 50 percent in Canada.

The three countries' differences in population and size result in different transportation needs and supply characteristics. Canada, the most sparsely populated country of the three, contains fewer than three persons per square kilometer of land area; the U.S. figure is just over 27—almost 10 times higher—while Mexico has more than 41 persons per square kilometer, nearly twice the density of the United States.¹

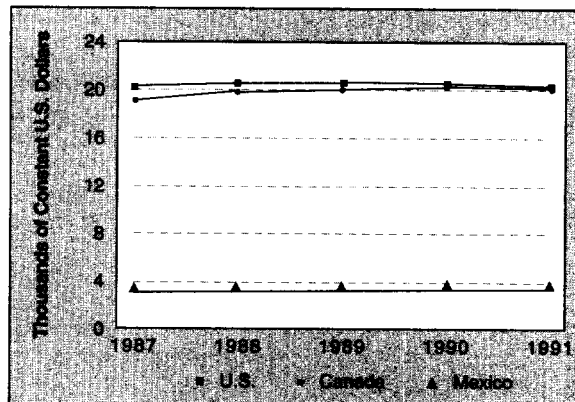
Figure 1. Country Populations



Economies

Gross domestic product (GDP) is the total output generated by labor and other productive resources within a country's borders, valued at market prices. The per capita GDP for Canada and the United States are quite similar—slightly over \$20,000 (in constant 1990 U.S. dollars)² in 1991. (See figure 2.) Mexico's per capita GDP is about 13 percent that of the other two countries.

Figure 2. Country per Capita GDP



Endnotes

1. Note, however, that North American populations are much less dense than those found in many European and Asian countries.

2. In order to compare the monetary units of the three countries in a meaningful manner, the Canadian dollar and Mexico peso were converted to constant 1990 U.S. dollars using 1990 exchange rates. Constant dollars, as opposed to current dollars, take inflation into account and therefore adjust for changes in the purchasing power of currencies over time.